

Sweet Release by GallifreyGod

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, Heavy Angst, Minor Trigger Warning, Past Domestic Violence, raw emotions

Language: English

Characters: Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Mentions of Lonnie

Relationships: Joyce Byers & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Past Joyce Byers/Lonnie Byers

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Summary:

Hopper comes home to tell Joyce that her ex-husband, Lonnie, has died in a car accident. He certainly didn't expect the words that came out of her mouth

Sweet Release

Author's Note:

This hits mega home for me. My dad is just like Lonnie so I basically wrote my own emotions. Sorry for anybody who had difficulty reading this. My therapist suggested that I write how I feel and since Joyce and I have a similar situation, it seemed easier to write it as her instead of me.

"Joyce, I need to talk to you." Hop said as he pulled off his hat. Joyce was surprised to see her husband home since he had a full shift today. The room went cold when Joyce saw the confusingly sad look on Hopper's face.

"Whats wrong, Hop?" Joyce asked as thousands of possibilities ran through her mind about what he was here for. Anxiety rolled through her belly like a tidal wave with each passing second. Was it Will or Jonathan? Was something wrong?

"Joyce, I got word from Indianapolis Police today. Lonnie was found dead early this morning. He was drunk and wrapped his car around a tree. He died on impact and toxicology said that his blood alcohol was well over three times the legal limit. I'm sorry, Joyce." Hopper said with a solemn tone. He expected her to be somewhat upset, given that Lonnie was the father of her kids. He wasn't going to be hurt if she was sad.

Joyce didn't cry, she didn't even flinch. Instead, Hopper heard what sounded like a sigh of relief come from his spouse. Confused by her actions, Jim suspected maybe she was in shock? He expected her to be just a little down at least. He knew that if Diane had died that he'd be sad of course, but Joyce just seemed null.

"Are you okay? You don't seem too shocked or sad." Hopper said calmly as he picked his words with care. He didn't want to upset her any further.

Joyce gently shook her head. "No, I'm not sad." She replied almost

stoically.

"Do you wanna talk about it? I'm here to listen." Jim said as he took her hand.

"You wanna know the truth about it, Hop? I could never feel 100% safe. Its nothing against you and its nothing against anybody really, but every moment that I knew Lonnie was alive and breathing, there was always a twinge in my gut. Not a single time have I been able to get groceries or gas without having the thought in the back of my head 'is he going to show up?'" Joyce started as she tried not to choke up. She had never really liked to talk about Lonnie with Hop, it wasn't a popular topic.

"That's not even the scariest part." Joyce began. "The most terrifying thing about all of that is that I knew he could've found me anywhere. That used to comfort me when I was still so naïve about him. Knowing that if I was ever in danger, he would always find a way to me no matter where on earth I was. That didn't change, except it became a threat. A terrifying threat. There wasn't anywhere on earth where I couldn't hide without him finding me somehow. What once relaxed me became one of my worst fears."

"I could never be completely out of his way of harm until he was dead and gone. He could be a vegetable, unable to even breathe, eat, or piss on his own, and I'd still be horrified. He could find his way to me from California to China and anywhere in between without stumbling along the way. It was like being watched all the time. Slowly it drives you mad until agoraphobia sets in but you don't even feel safe in your own home either. I could've ran until my feet fell off, the wheels burn off my car, and until the end of time, but it didn't change the fact that as long as he walked the same planet as me, I'd never have been completely okay." Joyce said as she looked at Hopper, who was nodding as he listened.

"The nightmares could've turned back into real life at any moment. I dreamt about the times he struck me and the boys, it never went away. Any time of any day, he could've shown up and those nightmares could've become reality again." Joyce continued as a bit of sadness appeared on her face.

“So no, I'm not sad. Not even a little bit. I feel bad for the boys, yes, but it's like letting go of a breath I didn't know I was holding for all those years. I can sleep at night without fearing he'll show up. I can go and get groceries without having to double check each aisle for any sign of him. I can finally walk down the street without waiting for his hand to lay on my shoulder. I don't have to double bolt the locks ever again on his and my anniversary. I don't have to be scared anymore, Hop. And now all I've got to say is one thing.”

“Which is?” Hopper inquired with his brows knitted.

“I hope he burns in hell.” Joyce spat with tears in her eyes. He couldn't tell if they were tears of sadness or anger, but it didn't matter. Hopper enveloped her in his arms, soothing her as he stroked her hair.

Maybe they were tears of relief.

Author's Note:

Duffer Brothers own Stranger Things and the characters. I am but their humble servant.